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Sermon on the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

JOHN 16, 5—15.

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We are now living in the time between Easter and Pentecost. We are therefore looking back upon Christ's atoning suffering and death and His glorious resurrection from the grave, and, at the same time, we are looking forward to His triumphant ascension into heaven and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Having completed His work, for which He had come upon this earth, the Son of man returned to heaven, whence He had come, to sit at the right hand of His Father, there to reign with almighty power and majesty over all creatures in heaven and on earth, and to be the advocate and mediator for His children upon the earth. And after His return thither He sent down His Holy Spirit in the shape of fiery tongues upon His disciples, to lead them into all the truth and to endow them with knowledge and holy zeal to go and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world lost in the night of error and idolatry.

Why was it that the descension of the Holy Ghost occurred immediately after Christ's ascension? Why did He not come before? To this question we find an answer in our text. There our Lord Himself tells us —

## WHAT RELATION EXISTS BETWEEN HIS WORK AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

He shows:

1. *That His work is the foundation for the Spirit's work, and*
2. *That the Spirit's work is the superstructure to His.*

### 1.

When Christ told His disciples that He was soon going to return to His Father, their heart was filled with grief, for they could not at the time understand the purpose of His departure. Therefore Christ

tells them: "But now . . . send Him unto you." Here Christ states plainly that unless He went to the Father, the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, would not come; that the coming of the latter therefore depended upon His going to the Father, *i. e.*, upon His suffering, death, resurrection, and subsequent ascension into heaven. In other words: the Savior tells us, that His own work is the foundation upon which the Spirit's work must rest, that unless He should first lay the foundation, the Spirit could not begin His work, and that, on the other hand, His work without that of the Holy Spirit would be incomplete and useless.

This statement He now proceeds to explain in the following words: "And when He . . . world is judged." In these words Christ tells His disciples that the work of the Holy Ghost should consist in inducing the world to believe in Christ and to accept Him as their only Savior, and thus to make mankind partakers of His glorious work of redemption.

Christ says, in the first place, the Comforter will reprove the world "of sin, because they believe not on me." It is sin that condemns man, for sin brought suffering and death into the world, it subjected man to God's temporal and eternal punishments. For "God is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Him." Nothing unclean can enter into His eternal kingdom of glory in heaven.

To rescue mankind from the terrible doom which sin must inevitably bring upon every man Christ came into the world, and by His suffering and death bore the punishment which our sins had incurred, thus redeeming us from the fate which otherwise would have befallen us. Since, therefore, Christ has thus made satisfaction for our sins, our sins can now condemn us no longer; since our Bondsman has paid the debt that we owe God, this debt cannot be exacted from us another time. Our sins no longer stand in our way to heaven. Only one sin there is which now can shut us out of heaven, and that is the sin of unbelief, the sin of "not believing on Christ," of rejecting His merit, and despising the salvation He has wrought for us. A man who lives in this sin of unbelief willfully shuts heaven against himself, and refuses to enter the door which Christ has thrown open to Him, and again unlocks the door of hell which Christ had closed against him. To reprove the world of this sin of unbelief, which alone can condemn them, is therefore the first work of the Holy Spirit.

In the second place, Christ says: "He shall reprove . . . ye see me no more." In order to be able to appear before the throne of God, and to stand before Him, man must have a perfect righteousness that is without the least blemish. For God is Himself infinitely holy and righteous, therefore those that would enter into communion

with Him must likewise be holy and righteous. "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy, the Lord, your God," these are His words. Now, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," says the prophet. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No man can fulfill the Law of God. We are all transgressors of His holy commandments, we have all forfeited the righteousness which we must have to stand justified before Him. If, therefore, we were to appear before His judgment seat with our own righteousness, we must all be rejected, for even the best of us lack the righteousness He requires of us.

But, behold! God Himself has provided a righteousness for us in which even the eyes of His justice cannot detect a flaw: the righteousness which Christ wrought for us by His going to the Father. By His suffering and death, as we have heard, He atoned for our sins, and by His resurrection He brought absolution and righteousness for us out of the grave. "He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification," as Paul tells us Rom. 4, 25. By raising Christ from the dead God declared Him and us just, for we died and rose in Him, because He was our substitute. There is no other righteousness that can avail anything on the day of judgment. Of this righteousness, therefore, the Holy Ghost in the second place reprobates men that they may accept it by faith.

Finally, Christ tells us, the Comforter shall reprove the world "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The prince of this world, *i. e.*, the devil, held undisputed sway over mankind on account of sin. All men, by the sinful depravity of their nature, are born into the kingdom of the devil, and are unable to extricate themselves from his power and rule. He holds them with an iron grip and leads them onward into the destruction that he has brought upon himself.

How, then, shall we escape his dreadful reign? Ah, brethren, One stronger than he has come upon the strong man armed, has bound him and taken the spoil from him! Christ, the almighty Son of God, has entered into combat with the mighty prince of darkness, and has overcome him. He took away our sins and their guilt, and thus the devil lost his power over us. The Prince of Life has vanquished the prince of this world in the mighty warfare for our salvation. The prince of this world is judged, and we who were his prisoners are free. The prince of this world no longer can claim us as his own, cannot harm us any more. And of this judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, the Holy Spirit reproves the world.

Finally, Christ says of the Comforter that He will lead the disciples, or Christians, who have been converted out of the world, into all truth, and thus glorify Jesus. "I have yet many things to

tell you . . . shall show it unto you," vv. 12—15. Christians after their conversion have come to a knowledge of, and a belief in, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. But as in the case of the disciples, unto whom Christ had yet many things to say, but who could not bear it just then, so with every Christian neither knowledge nor faith are perfect. For the truth of the Gospel is a deep ocean to whose bottom we can never dive in this life. Therefore Christ sends the Comforter that He may lead His Christians into all truth, and that He may cause them to understand the Gospel better and better, gradually lead them on from one truth to another, and thus glorify Jesus in them.

See, then, dear hearers, how the work of Christ forms the foundation of the Spirit's work in this world. Christ, by His "going to the Father," by His suffering, death, resurrection, and glorious ascension, has accomplished our salvation. To reprove or convince the world of this, and to lead Christians who have been converted by His reproof into all the truth of the Gospel, to glorify Jesus in them more and more, is the work of the Spirit. Without the work of Christ, then, the Spirit would have no work to perform in this world. Without the redemption of sinners there could be no conversion and sanctification. Without Christ's going to the Father there would have been no outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

## 2.

In the second place, however, also the work of Christ would have been incomplete and vain without the ensuing work of the Holy Ghost, for as the work of redemption is the foundation, so sanctification is the superstructure which completes the building of our salvation.

In order that men may become personal partakers of the great redemption of Christ which He has wrought out for all men, it is necessary that they become acquainted with it and accept it by faith. For "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "But how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" "So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Without faith, which appropriates the merit of Christ, no sinner can be saved, although Christ's redemption extends over all sinners alike. It must be accepted before it can benefit any one personally. But in order that men may come to a knowledge of and a belief in Christ's merit, the Gospel of Christ must be preached to them. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit, as Christ tells us in the text.

"When the Comforter is come, He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." Unbelief, as we heard before, is the only sin that can condemn man, because Christ has taken away

all our sins, which originally separated us from God. But it is a sad fact that all men naturally lie in this sin of unbelief. "The natural man," says Paul, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be." "Christ crucified is unto the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness." That is a description of the condition in which all men are by nature. The Christian religion in general they ridicule; the Law with its threats makes them enemies of God; the Gospel of Christ is either a stumbling-block or foolishness unto them. Men are all disbelievers by nature. Therefore the Holy Ghost must come and reprove the world of the sin of unbelief. By the preaching of the Law and of the Gospel He must show them the desperate condition in which they are, must awaken in their breast a wholesome terror and dread of the doom into which they are running, and bring them to an acceptance of Christ's redemption by faith in His name.

Again, Christ says, the Comforter must "reprove the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." By His going to the Father Christ has wrought out a righteousness that avails for all sinners, by which all may appear before God's throne and stand justified in His sight. But again it is necessary that every sinner must appropriate this righteousness by faith. But nobody does this naturally. As all men are by nature unbelievers, and enemies of God and the redemption of Christ, so they also refuse the righteousness which Christ has wrought for them. They, on the contrary, all trust in their own righteousness. They either think that, if they lead a life of external virtue and probity and are free from shameful vices and crimes, they are good enough for heaven, and God cannot reject them. Or if they have a more accurate conception of the justice of God, if they acknowledge that even minor sins are against His will and incur His punishment, they comfort themselves with the thought, that God is not only just, but also merciful, that He loves His creatures and will consequently overlook their shortcomings. Therefore the Holy Ghost must come and reprove the world of righteousness. He must teach them, by the preaching of the Law, that God is indeed a holy, righteous God, that every sin incurs His wrath and displeasure and brings eternal punishment upon the offender, that God's justice is so strict that it cannot let one sin go unpunished, and that hence they all have deserved to die and to suffer eternal punishment and torture in hell because they are all sinners. And after He has thus taught men that they themselves are devoid of a righteousness by which to stand before God, He must show them through the preaching of the Gospel how

Christ, by suffering and dying in their place and paying the penalty of their sin, has effected a righteousness by which they can now appear before God, and which they must therefore accept if they wish to escape the punishment of their iniquity.

Finally, the Holy Spirit must "reprove the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The devil has lost his power in his combat with the mighty Champion of our redemption. He has no right nor claim to us any longer, because our sins are taken away, which were the handwriting that committed us to his power. But still men, by their natural birth, are subjects of his kingdom. For although we are free from the guilt and penalty of sin, yet owing to our sinful birth we are not yet free from the bondage of sin. We all, by nature, lie in sin, we delight in sin and wrong-doing, and thus, by serving sin, we deliver ourselves voluntarily into the kingdom of the devil, from which, by virtue of Christ's redemption, we have been made free. Our original sin, our natural depravity, with which we are born, puts us into the devil's kingdom. And hence the Spirit of God must reprove the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. He must show men by the preaching of the Gospel that Christ has overcome the devil for them, so that he has no longer any right to dominate over them, that, on the contrary, they can now resist him by the help of God, and by faith in the merit of Christ escape the judgment which has already come upon the devil.

Besides reproving the world, the Holy Spirit also must lead Christians into all truth and glorify Jesus. Also believers are constantly in danger of losing their faith again, and, thus, of forfeiting the benefit of Christ's redemption. For they are living in an evil world, where they are daily beset and surrounded by dangers and temptations that threaten to destroy their faith and to ensnare their soul in the perdition from which they have escaped. The devil, the wicked world, and their own sinful flesh, which still cleaves to them, are forever on the alert, endeavoring to entrap them in sin and to lead them away from Christ. Thus, therefore, they need constant instruction and comfort and warning; they need to be upheld by a divine hand amidst all the perils that beset them. And it is the work of the Spirit to administer this strengthening and to preserve their faith. He leads them, by the preaching of the Gospel, into all the truth, teaches them to know and understand the glorious truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ always more and better. For He does not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He heareth, that He speaketh. He glorifies Jesus, for He receives of His and shows it unto believers. That is the sole office and work of the Holy Ghost in believers, to glorify Jesus in them, to build them firmer and firmer upon the foundation of Christ's redemption, to teach them to trust in His

righteousness alone, and thus to preserve them by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Do you see, dear hearers, the intimate relation that exists between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit? On Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension the foundation of our salvation was laid. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." But by the Holy Spirit the superstructure is put upon this unshakable foundation. Through Him men become partakers of that eternal salvation which Christ has merited for us. Therefore, my dear hearers, if you would profit by the work of Christ, let His Spirit perform His work in you likewise. Let Him reprove you of sin, righteousness, and judgment; let Him lead you into all truth; let Him glorify Jesus in you; let Him build you on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Thus shall you become a partaker of His eternal salvation. Amen.

G. L.

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## Mission Sermon.

GAL. 6, 9. 10.

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"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." This exhortation of St. Paul undoubtedly finds acceptance and an echo in your hearts to-day. It is meet and right to assemble in the name of Christ who says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." According to His promise Jesus this day is in our midst and takes an active interest in our work and worship; for our cause is His cause. Whatsoever we do in word or deed in the name of Jesus this afternoon is holy; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. The Gospel of Christ is our sure foundation, and our prayers are the sacrifices acceptable unto God, rising to the throne of the Most High as a sweet and precious incense. Therefore let us dedicate this day to the Lord in word and deed, in work and worship, with the offerings of our hearts and hands. Then the blessing of the Lord will rest upon us, and He will accept our offerings and make use of them in such a manner that His kingdom may come and His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My friends, the Lord looks down upon us in this hour with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction. For known unto Him are the motives of our coming together: charity, unselfishness, and the desire not to look upon our own things, but every man also upon the things of others. We are going to look with pity and compassion upon our brethren in the world, both upon those who are outside of

the pale of Christianity and upon those who must contend with many difficulties and must overcome many obstacles to remain in communion with the saints of God on earth. And we are going to encourage one another to do every man his utmost, in order that as many immortal souls as possible may be won for Christ's kingdom of grace and saved for His kingdom of glory. May the Lord bless us in these our intentions and cause them to succeed in action, that there may be joy in the presence of the angels over many a sinner who shall be the ripe fruit of our present spiritual sowing. To this end let me admonish you in the words of St. Paul:

“LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELUDOING!”

1. *The need is great.*
2. *The time is short.*
3. *God's promise is sure.*

1.

Let us not be weary in weldoing!” These words are addressed to Christians only. For the apostle writes in the tenth verse of our chapter: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the *household of faith*.” The Lord of the vineyard has no desire for such servants and no need of such helpers whose hearts are not in their work, “who seek for gain and follow but for form.” Unto such hypocrites and hirelings He says: “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.” When, on the last day, these insincere servants shall say: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?” the Lord will profess unto them: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity!” And if there are any in our gathering who are not willing to present themselves, body and soul, living sacrifices unto Christ, be it known unto them that the Lord has no need whatever of their services, and that we do not want one cent of their money, because it is filthy lucre, the insincere gift of unclean hands and impure hearts.

If, however, Christ is the Sun of your souls, if you are living stones in God's spiritual temple, if the Holy Spirit is the motive power of your actions: then to you pertains the exhortation: “Let us not be weary in weldoing!” For then you are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” And the noblest good work is the conversion and rescuing of sinners, the leading to the fold of Christ of straying sheep, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd.

Missionary work requires our constant and unabating, persistent and unflagging attention, devotion, and activity, even as St. Paul

writes: "*Let us not be weary in welldoing!*" But constant work produces fatigue. Why, then, does the apostle admonish us not to be weary in welldoing? My friends, he who performs a labor of love knows no fatigue. If you delight in doing the will of the Lord because the Lord is your Delight and your Desire, then you will know no weariness despite the most arduous labors. Consider that your source of strength is God; "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And remember the comforting and strengthening words of Isaiah when weariness threatens to overcome you on the path of duty and discipleship: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

When St. Paul exhorts: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," he intimates that we have *abundant opportunity* to do good, to bring good tidings, to publish salvation, in short, to be God's missionaries. The spiritual need in the world is great. Millions of human beings are groping about in the utter darkness of heathen idolatry, in sore straits and in a perilous condition. Instead of lifting trusting hearts and hands to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the heathen in their blindness kneel down to wood and stone, and seek to pacify the enraged divinities with sacrifices and fasts. Instead of having a faithful knowledge of the true God who has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus, His incarnate Son, our Savior, the heathen worship man-made idols who have hands, and handle not, feet, and walk not, neither speak they through their throat. Instead of relying upon the merits of the Savior who, with His blood, cleansed our souls from all unrighteousness, the heathen are dead in trespasses and sins and can find no balm of Gilead to heal the wounds, nor a cleansing fountain to wash away the stains of sin. Instead of awaiting death with joyous anticipations of the peace beyond the grave, the heathen are terrorized by the thoughts of death and the grave and are transported violently and unwillingly from time to eternity. Cruel and desperate means are employed by them to pacify the gods. The children of the Hindus are thrown as sacrifices into the waters of the Ganges and the Indus. Until the recent prohibition by the English government thousands prostrated themselves annually before the Juggernaut, the sacred cart of the Hindus, to be crushed to death by its ponderous wheels. The educated Hindus, it is true, have elevated themselves above the superstitions of the lower castes. But the doctrines which they promulgate are still more rayless and hopeless. The Buddhists, a numerous heathen sect in India and China, teach that the highest aim in existence is non-existence, dissolution, evaporation in Nirvana, nothingness. Poor heathen, whose greatest desire is destruction, whose

highest hope is hopelessness! Lord, have mercy upon them, and grant us grace to be Thy instruments of mercy unto them!

The heathen, for the most part, do not live in our vicinity, although we often have next-door neighbors who are worse than heathen, because they despise the golden opportunity offered them to hear the Word which can save their souls. The heathen live mostly in Eastern Asia and on the dark continent, Africa. Annually many missionaries are sent to them with the means of grace. Our Synod has a small body of men in India devoted to the noble work. But what are they among so many heathen? Therefore, because the need is so great, "pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest," that He will protect them and prosper the work of their hands. And since missionaries need not only prayerful, but also visible, substantial support, let us, in abundant gratitude for the manifold blessings which the Lord has showered upon us, bring unto the Lord a substantial offering for foreign missions, that the sound of the trumpet of the Gospel may grow in volume and intensity, until its echo shall ring from shore to shore and from pole to pole.

Also in our own land and in our vicinity the spiritual need of the people is great. We Lutherans are awake to the fact that charity begins at home, and devote much time, labor, and money to home missions, that is, to the search and spiritual care of such as are far removed from the ministration of our pastors, and of such as are too small in numbers and means to maintain a resident pastor. To these needy and straying Christians missionaries are sent who receive the means of support from Synod. In sparsely settled regions, especially in the rural districts of the West and the Northwest, traveling missionaries are a necessity; and oftentimes their appearance in regions and communities that were formerly spiritually neglected is followed by a veritable spiritual boom. Many a pioneer of Iowa can tell of the successful efforts of the workers in the field of domestic missions; and doubtless there are some in this assemblage who can bear him out with their testimony. And now that the Lord has been so bountiful in His blessings, now that His Word and Church are established firmly in your midst, show that you are not selfish Christians who want to have the Gospel for themselves only, but give unto others an opportunity of enjoying the same privileges you are enjoying. Remember that the more liberally and lovingly your gifts are bestowed, the more missionaries can be dispatched to new fields, the better and more agreeable the lot of the missionaries can be made, the greater will be the joy of the angels and the glory of the Church. May the Lord open your eyes to see the spiritual need in the world; may He make you willing to give of your abundance and also of your poverty toward the upbuilding, maintenance, and spreading of His Church, the communion of saints!

## 2.

The spiritual need in the world is great; the time allotted us to succor our fellow-men in their need is short. When the apostle exhorts: "As we have therefore *opportunity*, let us do good unto all men," he, in the first place, addresses every individual Christian, and tells him that he must labor while yet it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. For this purpose the Lord lengthens the days of His Christians, that they may proclaim His glorious message of peace and salvation unto others. Otherwise He would shorten His children's day of life and take them from this vale of tears and out of the wilderness of struggle and temptation to Himself in heaven.

There are many who say: "I shall wait until I am older, before I begin to work for the Lord." How do you know that you will grow older? Who will vouch for it that you will not be taken from this earth suddenly in the fullness of your years? The Lord wants our undivided and uninterrupted service from the days of early youth to the grave. Even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He has ordained strength. The older a Christian grows and the more the Lord endows him with spiritual gifts and powers, the more the Lord expects His Christian to place his gifts and powers into His service. If the Lord were to send His messenger, Death, to you unawares, what, think you, will your lot be if the Bridegroom have come and found you sleeping?

Others say: "When I am richer I shall be able to give more and better." Who told you that your prosperity is going to continue? To-morrow, perhaps, poverty and failure will stare you in the face. Therefore invest your money where it will be safe, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. And do you know that the moneys which you give at these festivals are your very best investments? For the Lord to whom you lend your money will not return the same with an interest of six or eight per cent. in coin or earthly vanishing possessions, but a hundredfold in the eternally secure and fully digested securities of heaven.

When St. Paul says: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good," he, on the other hand, reminds us of that day when all opportunities shall have passed, of the end of the world and the day of judgment. The time till judgment day is short. For St. John said nearly 1900 years ago: "Little children, it is the last time." Our present time, then, surely must be the last minute of earth's day, and we must be standing upon the threshold of the judgment hall of heaven. Soon the last trumpet will sound, and the doors to the judgment hall will be opened, all earthly labors shall have come to an end, and "every man shall receive the things done in the body,

according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And now think of the millions of heathen starving for want of the bread of life, and of the thousands in our own land thirsting after the water of life. How shall all be satisfied in the short time before the end of time?

Let us, then, be up and doing, . . .

Still achieving, still pursuing,

Learn to labor and to wait.

### 3.

The spiritual need on earth is great; the time for work is short; but the promise of God is sure. Missionary work is arduous and oftentimes discouraging because of the many apparent failures and disappointments. The amount of labor and the expenditure of money seem to overbalance the results obtained, results which seldom are of a striking nature. The reason for this lies in the fact that we superficial mortals reckon with dollars and cents, that a certain investment must bring a certain return; because in matters concerning the salvation of sinners we see but the surface and have little, if any, insight into the affairs of the soul.

But luckily for us, God reckons not with dollars and cents, but with the willingness and faithfulness of His servants. All that He requires of His workers is faithfulness. And He promises us a reward, not for results as they may appear to us, but for constancy and faithfulness, when He says: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." And the promise of our text reads: "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

A day is coming in which the Lord is going to show us that He can reckon better than we can, that He is faithful, and that all His promises have met with their fulfillment. On the last day He will give His laborers eternal rest after the heat, labor, and trials of earth's day; He will invite them to attend the harvest festival of heaven. Then each laborer will come with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him, sheaves, although of his sowing, which, however, had ripened unto eternal life without his knowledge. For behold! a vast multitude of saved souls will surround him and bring him to Jesus, unto whom they will confess before the whole assembled world and the hosts of the angels: "This servant of Thine, holy Master, has preached Thine own Gospel to us. And the Gospel which he preached has been for us the means of our salvation." Then will be seen many a maid with both arms filled with sheaves; many a servant will have gained five other talents to his original five. Oh, how this revelation will surprise the Christian! Then he will confess: "The Lord is always faithful to His promises." My friends, let us put our shoulders to the wheel of the Gospel, that it may roll up the steepest hill of doubt and unbelief and surmount all obstacles of civilized in-

difference and heathen idolatry. And let us trust God for the results! Then, if we plod onward industriously and faithfully and hopefully, "we shall reap in due season, if we faint not."

May the Lord strengthen His servants for their labors in His cause toward the upbuilding and establishment of His kingdom! May He fill your hearts with love for His work and with eager concern for the eternal welfare of your fellow-men! And, on the last day, may He save us all according to His promise! To Him, the Father, and the Son, the Savior, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, be glory, praise, and honor now, henceforth, and forevermore! Amen.

JNO. H. V.

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## Sermon at a Golden Wedding on Ps. 103, 1.

(By a son-in-law.)

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"N., wilt thou have N., here present, to be thy wedded wife, love her, honor her, cherish her, and keep thee only unto her, as long as ye both do live?" "N., wilt thou have N., here present, to be thy wedded husband, love him, honor him, serve and obey him, and keep thee only unto him as long as ye both do live?" These questions were addressed to you fifty years ago to-day by the sainted Rev. M. And after you both had answered, "Yes, I will," he pronounced the significant words: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Forasmuch as N. and N. have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same here publicly before God and the world, and thereto have joined their hands, I pronounce them man and wife, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." To-day, fifty years later, you are again in the house of God in the presence of a large congregation. Fifty years ago you requested the prayers of the Christian church that God might bless your union; to-day you request the congregation to join you in giving thanks to Him for having blessed your union. Fifty years ago you appeared before the altar, your hearts beating high with youthful enthusiasm, strength, and expectations. To-day you are before the altar in the fullness of years, with hearts beating with gratitude to the Lord for having preserved your strength, and allowing you to have realized the desires and expectations of fifty years ago. In view of what God has done for you, it is eminently appropriate for you to exclaim: "O bless the Lord, my soul!"

But this day does not interest only you. It is a day of thanksgiving for your children as well. Yea, more than this, it is a day which should call forth the thanks of all your acquaintances and of the whole congregation. This day brings most forcibly to our minds the goodness and wisdom of God in establishing the estate of matrimony. Fifty years of happy married life concern not only the aged

couple, but also the children and children's children, and, in fact, all those who really desire the welfare of the Church and the community.

It is eminently fitting that you, dear parents, should say to-day: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

If you will allow the many years which have elapsed since you left the church for the first time as man and wife to pass in review before your memory, you will see a constantly changing procession of dark and bright days. But you will not fail to notice that even in the darkest days the Lord was with you and blessed you. Those first happy years when you were compelled to toil day and night for your daily bread were lightened by your mutual love. As the family increased God blessed your labors in such a measure that you never were obliged to suffer want. When sickness and death entered into your home, you had the unfailing comfort of God's Word. When God gave you one child after the other, your work and worry increased in proportion, but every child also brought an additional ray of light and joy.

And now, in the eve of your life, you are enjoying the fruits of fifty years of labor and prayer. As a result of your constant attention to your daily work, under God's blessing, of course, you can pass the remaining years allotted to you without asking the anxious question: "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The hardships and vexations of parenthood were yours in the years of strength, but now you are enjoying the love and esteem of all your children, who delight to come to the old home because you are still there and were doubly happy to travel hundreds of miles to be with you to-day. Though the responsibilities of parenthood weighed heavily upon you for many years, you now have the gratification of seeing all your children grown and filling useful positions in life. As a consequence of an abstemious and virtuous life, you are now, although past the mark of threescore years and ten, enjoying unusual bodily vigor, and a cheerful spirit, which finds infinite happiness in beholding the goodness of God in the gift of trees and flowers. As Christians you cheerfully acknowledge that all these priceless possessions are gifts of God's bounty, and therefore you say: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

But not you only, nay, also the children, sons- and daughters-in-law, and grandchildren are blessing the Lord to-day for His great love.

Your children thank God for what you have been to them. They gratefully acknowledge their deep indebtedness to you for all the care that you spent on them. They thank you for providing for

their needs during the years of infancy and childhood. As they have now grown up and have themselves assumed the responsibilities of parenthood they are able to understand and appreciate the love and the care they received at your hands.

But they desire on this day to give special thanks to the loving kindness of God in giving them Christian parents. They are grateful to you for having sent them to a Christian school, for teaching them to attend divine services, for having them confirmed, for the daily devotions in the circle of the family. They thank you for setting them a worthy example in your daily life, so that they learned how to establish Christian homes of their own. They have seen in your home a family life such as God intended it to be, where the husband is the head of the wife, and the wife the crown of her husband. They had before them the example of a father who was willing to work indefatigably, in order to give his children an opportunity to learn and fill important positions in the community. They had before their eyes the example of a godly mother who realized that the home was the woman's proper sphere of activity. By your example you have trained your sons to be good husbands to their wives, and Christian fathers to their children, and your daughters to be faithful wives and mothers, making happy the hearts of their husbands, and rearing their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

For these great privileges all your descendants gratefully exclaim: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

An occasion of this kind calls for the gratitude of all those that sincerely desire the welfare of the Church and the State.

Fifty years of happy married life, the rearing of a large family of children in the paths of righteousness, the present standing of the aged couple and all their children, clearly show that the best interests of the family, the Church, and the State are served by keeping inviolate the ordinances of a wise and good God. The Lord Himself instituted the holy estate of matrimony. In spite of all the changes which have taken place in society, He has preserved the institution. Experience abundantly shows that the welfare of a nation is closely connected with the purity of the marriage relation. Alas, there are in our days many who disregard the sacredness of their marriage vows. On the slightest provocation they have man put asunder what God joined together. Again there are many who disobey the injunction of the Lord: "Be fruitful and multiply," and wickedly refuse to assume the burdens and responsibilities of parenthood. "Children are a heritage of the Lord," but they will not accept the heritage. As an excuse some offer the shallow remark of quality being better than quantity.

Thousands of happy marriages show that if man and woman enter into the holy estate of matrimony in the fear and love of God,

they are laying the foundation not only of their own happiness, but also of great usefulness to Church and State. Your union also bears witness to the wisdom and goodness of God. Your experience shows that the normal life of man and woman is the married life. Your experience proves that the marriage tie ought not to be broken for every trivial cause. Your experience shows that although there may be many children, they need not be deficient in quality, but can be brought up to be good and useful members of the Church and the State. And because the evident design of God in instituting the estate of matrimony has been so clearly realized in your union, all who sincerely desire the real welfare of church and community will join you in saying: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

And may our loving Father in heaven, who has so abundantly blessed you in the many years of your life, continue in His great love. May He preserve you in the faith, may He keep you with us long as examples to your children and children's children, and may He permit your happy union to serve for many more years as a living monument to His wisdom and goodness. Amen. E. F. H.

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## Miscellany.

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**Preaching and pastoral work**, while distinct, still supplement each other both in the minister and in his efficiency among the people. The minister is helped in the careful preparation of his sermon by conversing with his people on religious subjects, getting their points of view, manner of thinking and of feeling, and thus being stimulated in presenting the Gospel from the pulpit. So he who faithfully preaches the truths of the Gospel will be stimulated to follow them up by trying to enforce them upon individuals, with the longing to see the blessed results in their lives. He should have such a system of study and of visiting that one would not conflict with or hinder the other. So with his efficiency among the people: his welcome by them and his personal influence upon them will depend very largely upon his power in the pulpit. If he is strong in the pulpit, his word will be welcomed and have weight in private. On the other hand, his strength in the pulpit will be augmented in its effect upon the people by their respect for him as a pastor. (F. S. Schenck, *Modern Practical Theology*, p. 116 sq.)

**The Sermon and the Text.** The sermon must be the text expanded and the text the sermon contracted. Let your sermon grow out of your text, just as the boughs of an oak grow out of its trunk. The main thought of the text should furnish the trunk of the discourse; and every inference and every practical application should have an organic connection with the text. (*Homiletic Review.*)